RALPH WALDO EMERSON

POWERFUL POEMS

EXTENDED ANNOTATED EDITION

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Ralph Waldo Emerson

Contents:

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

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Ralph Waldo Emerson – A Primer

Emerson was an American poet and essayist, born in Boston, Mass., May 25, 1803. He is the son of the Rev. William Emerson, pastor of the first church in that city. In his eighth year, on the death of his father, he was sent to one of the public grammar schools, and was soon qualified to enter the Latin school. Here his first attempts in literary composition were made, consisting of original poems recited at exhibitions of the school. He entered Harvard college in 1817, and graduated in August, 1821. He does not appear to have held a high rank in his class, though the records show that he twice received a Bowdoin prize for dissertations, and once a Boylston prize for declamation. He was also the poet of his class on “class day.” While at the university he made more use of the library than is common among students, and was distinguished among his classmates for his knowledge of general literature. For five years after leaving college he was engaged in teaching school. In 1826 he was “approbated to preach” by the

Middlesex association of ministers; but his health at this time failing, he spent the winter in South Carolina and Florida. In March, 1829, he was ordained as colleague of Henry Ware, at the second Unitarian church of Boston. He belongs to a clerical race. For eight generations, reckoning back to his ancestor Peter Bulkley, one of the founders of Concord, Mass., there had always been a clergyman in the family, either on the paternal or maternal side. He was the eighth in succession of this consecutive line of ministers. In 1832 he asked and received a dismission from the second church, on account of differences of opinion between himself and its members touching the Lord's supper; and in December he sailed for Europe, where he remained nearly a year. On his return in the winter of 1833-'4 he began his career as a lecturer, with a discourse before the Boston mechanics' institute on the subject of “Water.” Three others followed, two on Italy descriptive of his recent tour in that country, and the last on the “Relation of Man to the Globe.” In 1834 he delivered in Boston a series of biographical lectures on Michel Angelo, Milton, Luther, George Fox, and Edmund Burke, the first two of which were afterward published in the “North American Review.” In this year also he read at Cambridge a poem before the Phi Beta Kappa society. In 1835 he fixed his residence at Concord, Mass., where he has since lived. During the winter he delivered in Boston a course of 10 lectures on English literature. These were followed, in 1836, by 12 lectures on the philosophy of history; in 1837, by 10 lectures on human culture; in 1838, by 10 lectures on human life; in 1839, by 10 lectures on the present age; in 1841, by 7 lectures on the times; and since that period he has delivered several courses of lectures in Boston. A small volume entitled “Nature” (1836), an oration before the Phi Beta Kappa society, with the title of “The American Scholar” (1837), an address to the senior class of the Cambridge divinity school (1838), and “The Method of Nature” (1841), contained the most prominent peculiarities

of his scheme of idealism, and by their freshness and depth of thought, and compact beauty of expression, allured many readers into becoming disciples. In 1840 a quarterly periodical called “The Dial” was commenced, with Miss Margaret Fuller as editor, assisted by A. B. Alcott, William H. Channing, Mr. Emerson, Theodore Parker, George Ripley, and others. It was published for four years, and during the last two years of its existence it was under the editorship of Mr. Emerson. In 1841 the first, and in 1844 the second series of his “Essays” were published. In 1846 he collected and published a volume of his poems. The next year he visited England to fulfil an engagement to deliver a series of lectures before a union of mechanics' institutes and other societies. In 1849 he collected in one volume entitled “Miscellanies” his “Nature” and nine lectures and college addresses, which had been previously issued in pamphlet form, or printed in “The Dial.” In 1850 “Essays on Representative Men,” a series of masterly mental portraits, with some of the features overcharged, was published. To the “Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli,” which appeared in 1852, he contributed some admirable interpretative criticism. In 1856 he published “English Traits,” a work in which he seizes and emphasizes the characteristics of the English mind and people; and in 1860 “The Conduct of Life.” His contributions to the “Atlantic Monthly” have been collected. “May Day and Other Pieces” (poems) appeared in 1867; “Society and Solitude” in 1870. A revised edition of his “Prose Works Complete” was published in 1869. Mr. Emerson has also delivered many unpublished addresses on slavery, woman's rights, and other topics of public interest; and he has been one of the most prominent of the lecturers who address the lyceums of the country. — As a writer, Mr. Emerson is distinguished for a singular union of poetic imagination with practical acuteness. His vision takes a wide sweep in the realms of the ideal, but is no less firm and penetrating in the sphere of facts. His

observations on society, on manners, on character, on institutions, are stamped with sagacity, and indicate a familiar knowledge of the homely phases of life, which are seldom viewed in their poetical relations. One side of his wisdom is worldly wisdom. The brilliant transcendentalist is evidently a man not easy to be deceived in matters pertaining to the ordinary course of human affairs. His common-sense shrewdness is vivified by a pervasive wit. With him, however, wit is not an end, but a means, and usually employed for the detection of pretence and imposture. Mr. Emerson's practical understanding is sometimes underrated from the fact that he never groups his thoughts by the methods of logic. He gives few reasons, even when he is most reasonable. He does not prove, but announces, aiming directly at the intelligence of his readers, without striving to extract a reluctant assent by force of argument. Insight, not reasoning, is his process. The bent of his mind is to ideal laws, which are perceived by the intuitive faculty, and are beyond the province of dialectics. Equally conspicuous is his tendency to embody ideas in the forms of imagination. No spiritual abstraction is so evanescent but he thus transforms it into a concrete reality. He seldom indulges in the expression of sentiment, and in his nature emotion seems to be less the product of the heart than of the brain. Mr. Emerson's style is in the nicest harmony with the character of his thought. It is condensed almost to abruptness. Occasionally he purchases compression at the expense of clearness, and his merits as a writer consist rather in the choice of words than in the connection of sentences, though his diction is vitalized by the presence of a powerful creative element. The singular beauty and intense life and significance of his language demonstrate that he has not only something to say, but knows exactly how to say it. Fluency, however, is out of the question in a style which combines such austere economy of words with the determination to load every word with

vital meaning. But the great characteristic of Mr. Emerson's intellect is the perception and sentiment of beauty. So strong is this, that he accepts nothing in life that is morbid, uncomely, haggard, or ghastly. The fact that an opinion depresses, instead of invigorating, is with him a sufficient reason for its rejection. His observation, his wit, his reason, his imagination, his style, all obey the controlling sense of beauty, which is at the heart of his nature, and instinctively avoid the ugly and the base. Those portions of Mr. Emerson's writings which relate to philosophy and religion may be considered as fragmentary contributions to the “Philosophy of the Infinite.” He has no system, and indeed system in his mind is associated with charlatanism. His largest generalization is “Existence.” On this inscrutable theme his conceptions vary with his moods and experience. Sometimes it seems to be man who parts with his personality in being united to God; sometimes it seems to be God who is impersonal, and who comes to personality only in man; and the real obscurity or vacillation of his metaphysical ideas is increased by the vivid and positive concrete forms in which they are successively clothed.

Powerful Poems

PREFACE

In Mr. Cabot's prefatory note to the Riverside Edition of the Poems, published the year after Mr. Emerson's death, he said:—

"This volume contains nearly all the pieces included in the POEMS and MAY-DAY of former editions. In 1876, Mr. Emerson published a selection from his Poems, adding six new ones and omitting many[1]. Of those omitted, several are now restored, in accordance with the expressed wishes of many readers and lovers of them. Also some pieces never before published are here given in an Appendix; on various grounds. Some of them appear to have had Mr. Emerson's approval, but to have been withheld because they were unfinished. These it seemed best not to suppress, now that they can never receive their completion. Others, mostly of an early date, remained unpublished, doubtless because of their personal and private nature. Some of these seem to have an autobiographic interest sufficient to justify their publication. Others again, often mere fragments, have been admitted as characteristic, or as expressing in poetic form thoughts found in the Essays.

[1] *Selected Poems*: Little Classic Edition.

"In coming to a decision in these cases it seemed, on the whole, preferable to take the risk of including too much rather than the opposite, and to leave the task of further winnowing to the hands of Time.

"As was stated in the preface to the first volume of this edition of Mr. Emerson's writings, the readings adopted by him in the Selected Poems have not always been followed here, but in some cases preference has been given to corrections made by him when he was in fuller strength than at the time of the last revision.

"A change in the arrangement of the stanzas of 'May-Day,' in the part representative of the march of Spring, received his sanction as bringing them more nearly in accordance with the events in Nature."

In the preparation of the Riverside Edition of the *Poems*, Mr. Cabot very considerately took the present editor into counsel (as representing Mr. Emerson's family), who at that time in turn took counsel with several persons of taste and mature judgment with regard especially to the admission of poems hitherto unpublished and of fragments that seemed interested and pleasing. Mr. Cabot and he were entirely in accord with regard to the Riverside Edition. In the present edition, the substance of the Riverside Edition has been preserved, with hardly an exception, although some poems and fragments have been added. None of the poems therein printed have been omitted. "The House," which appeared in the first volume of *Poems*, and "Nemesis," "Una," "Love and Thought" and "Merlin's Songs," from the *May-Day* volume, have been restored. To the few mottoes of the Essays, which Mr. Emerson printed as "Elements" in *May-Day*, most of the others have been added. Following Mr. Emerson's precedent of giving his brother Edward's "Last Farewell" a place beside the poem in his memory, two pleasing poems by Ellen Tucker, his first wife, which he published in the *Dial*, have been placed with his own poems relating to her. The publication in the last edition of some poems that Mr. Emerson had long kept by him, but had never quite been ready to print, and of various fragments on Poetry, Nature and Life, was not done without advice and careful consideration, and then was felt to be perhaps a rash experiment. The continued interest which has been shown in the author's thought and methods and life—for these unfinished pieces contain much autobiography—has made the present editor feel it justifiable to keep almost all of these and to add a few. Their order has been slightly altered.

A few poems from the verse-books sufficiently complete to have a title are printed in the Appendix for the first time:

"Insight," "September," "October," "Hymn" and "Riches."

After much hesitation the editor has gathered in their order of time, and printed at the end of the book, some twenty early pieces, a few of them taken from the Appendix of the last edition and others never printed before. They are for the most part journals in verse covering the period of his school-teaching, study for the ministry and exercise of that office, his sickness, bereavement, travel abroad and return to the new life. This sad period of probation is illuminated by the episode of his first love. Not for their poetical merit, except in flashes, but for the light they throw on the growth of his thought and character are they included.

In this volume the course of the Muse, as Emerson tells it, is pursued with regard to his own poems.

> I hang my verses in the wind,
> Time and tide their faults will find.

EDWARD W. EMERSON.

March 12, 1904.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Emersons first appeared in the north of England, but Thomas, who landed in Massachusetts in 1638, came from Hertfordshire. He built soon after a house, sometimes railed the Saint's Rest, which still stands in Ipswich on the slope of Heart-break Hill, close by Labour-in-vain Creek. Ralph Waldo Emerson was the sixth in descent from him. He was born in Boston, in Summer Street, May 25, 1803. He was the third son of William Emerson, the minister of

the First Church in Boston, whose father, William Emerson, had been the patriotic minister of Concord at the outbreak of the Revolution, and died a chaplain in the army. Ruth Haskins, the mother of Ralph Waldo Emerson, was left a widow in 1811, with a family of five little boys. The taste of these boys was scholarly, and four of them went through the Latin School to Harvard College, and graduated there. Their mother was a person of great sweetness, dignity, and piety, bringing up her sons wisely and well in very straitened circumstances, and loved by them. Her husband's stepfather, Rev. Dr. Ripley of Concord, helped her, and constantly invited the boys to the Old Manse, so that the woods and fields along the Concord River were first a playground and then the background of the dreams of their awakening imaginations.

Born in the city, Emerson's young mind first found delight in poems and classic prose, to which his instincts led him as naturally as another boy's would to go fishing, but his vacations in the country supplemented these by giving him great and increasing love of nature. In his early poems classic imagery is woven into pictures of New England woodlands. Even as a little boy he had the habit of attempting flights of verse, stimulated by Milton, Pope, or Scott, and he and his mates took pleasure in declaiming to each other in barns and attics. He was so full of thoughts and fancies that he sought the pen instinctively, to jot them down.

At college Emerson did not shine as a scholar, though he won prizes for essays and declamations, being especially unfitted for mathematical studies, and enjoying the classics rather in a literary than grammatical way. And yet it is doubtful whether any man in his class used his time to better purpose with reference to his after life, for young Emerson's instinct led him to wide reading of works,

outside the curriculum, that spoke directly to him. He had already formed the habit of writing in a journal, not the facts but the thoughts and inspirations of the day; often, also, good stories or poetical quotations, and scraps of his own verse.

On graduation from Harvard in the class of 1821, following the traditions of his family, Emerson resolved to study to be a minister, and meantime helped his older brother William in the support of the family by teaching in a school for young ladies in Boston, that the former had successfully established. The principal was twenty-one and the assistant nineteen years of age. For school-teaching on the usual lines Emerson was not fitted, and his youth and shyness prevented him from imparting his best gifts to his scholars. Years later, when, in his age, his old scholars assembled to greet him, he regretted that no hint had been brought into the school of what at that very time "I was writing every night in my chamber, my first thoughts on morals and the beautiful laws of compensation, and of individual genius, which to observe and illustrate have given sweetness to many years of my life." Yet many scholars remembered his presence and teaching with pleasure and gratitude, not only in Boston, but in Chelmsford and Roxbury, for while his younger brothers were in college it was necessary that he should help. In these years, as through all his youth, he was loved, spurred on in his intellectual life, and keenly criticised by his aunt, Mary Moody Emerson, an eager and wide reader, inspired by religious zeal, high-minded, but eccentric.

The health of the young teacher suffered from too ascetic a life, and unmistakable danger-signals began to appear, fortunately heeded in time, but disappointment and delay resulted, borne, however, with sense and courage. His course at the Divinity School in Cambridge was much

broken; nevertheless, in October, 1826, he was "approbated to preach" by the Middlesex Association of Ministers. A winter at the North at this time threatened to prove fatal, so he was sent South by his helpful kinsman, Rev. Samuel Ripley, and passed the winter in Florida with benefit, working northward in the spring, preaching in the cities, and resumed his studies at Cambridge.

In 1829, Emerson was called by the Second or Old North Church in Boston to become the associate pastor with Rev. Henry Ware, and soon after, because of his senior's delicate health, was called on to assume the full duty. Theological dogmas, such as the Unitarian Church of Channing's day accepted, did not appeal to Emerson, nor did the supernatural in religion in its ordinary acceptation interest him. The omnipresence of spirit, the dignity of man, the daily miracle of the universe, were what he taught, and while the older members of the congregation may have been disquieted that he did not dwell on revealed religion, his words reached the young people, stirred thought, and awakened aspiration. At this time he lived with his mother and his young wife (Ellen Tucker) in Chardon Street. For three years he ministered to his people in Boston. Then having felt the shock of being obliged to conform to church usage, as stated prayer when the spirit did not move, and especially the administration of the Communion, he honestly laid his troubles before his people, and proposed to them some modification of this rite. While they considered his proposition, Emerson went into the White Mountains to weigh his conflicting duties to his church and conscience. He came down, bravely to meet the refusal of the church to change the rite, and in a sermon preached in September, 1832, explained his objections to it, and, because he could not honestly administer it, resigned.

He parted from his people in all kindness, but the wrench was felt. His wife had recently died, he was ill himself, his life seemed to others broken up. But meantime voices from far away had reached him. He sailed for Europe, landed in Italy, saw cities, and art, and men, but would not stay long. Of the dead, Michael Angelo appealed chiefly to him there; Landor among the living. He soon passed northward, making little stay in Paris, but sought out Carlyle, then hardly recognized, and living in the lonely hills of the Scottish Border. There began a friendship which had great influence on the lives of both men, and lasted through life. He also visited Wordsworth. But the new life before him called him home.

He landed at Boston within the year in good health and hope, and joined his mother and youngest brother Charles in Newton. Frequent invitations to preach still came, and were accepted, and he even was sounded as to succeeding Dr. Dewey in the church at New Bedford; but, as he stipulated for freedom from ceremonial, this came to nothing.

In the autumn of 1834 he moved to Concord, living with his kinsman, Dr. Ripley, at the Manse, but soon bought house and land on the Boston Road, on the edge of the village towards Walden woods. Thither, in the autumn, he brought his wife. Miss Lidian Jackson, of Plymouth, and this was their home during the rest of their lives.

The new life to which he had been called opened pleasantly and increased in happiness and opportunity, except for the sadness of bereavements, for, in the first few years, his brilliant brothers Edward and Charles died, and soon afterward Waldo, his firstborn son, and later his mother. Emerson had left traditional religion, the city, the Old World, behind, and now went to Nature as his teacher, his

inspiration. His first book, "Nature," which he was meditating while in Europe, was finished here, and published in 1836. His practice during all his life in Concord was to go alone to the woods almost daily, sometimes to wait there for hours, and, when thus attuned, to receive the message to which he was to give voice. Though it might be colored by him in transmission, he held that the light was universal.

"Ever the words of the Gods resound,
  But the porches of man's ear
Seldom in this low life's round
  Are unsealed that he may hear."

But he resorted, also, to the books of those who had handed down the oracles truly, and was quick to find the message destined for him. Men, too, he studied eagerly, the humblest and the highest, regretting always that the brand of the scholar on him often silenced the men of shop and office where he came. He was everywhere a learner, expecting light from the youngest and least educated visitor. The thoughts combined with the flower of his reading were gradually grouped into lectures, and his main occupation through life was reading these to who would hear, at first in courses in Boston, but later all over the country, for the Lyceum sprang up in New England in these years in every town, and spread westward to the new settlements even beyond the Mississippi. His winters were spent in these rough, but to him interesting journeys, for he loved to watch the growth of the Republic in which he had faith, and his summers were spent in study and writing. These lectures were later severely pruned and revised, and the best of them gathered into seven volumes of essays under different names between 1841 and 1876. The courses in Boston, which at first were given in the Masonic Temple, were always well attended by earnest and

thoughtful people. The young, whether in years or in spirit, were always and to the end his audience of the spoken or written word. The freedom of the Lyceum platform pleased Emerson. He found that people would hear on Wednesday with approval and unsuspectingly doctrines from which on Sunday they felt officially obliged to dissent.

Mr. Lowell, in his essays, has spoken of these early lectures and what they were worth to him and others suffering from the generous discontent of youth with things as they were. Emerson used to say, "My strength and my doom is to be solitary;" but to a retired scholar a wholesome offset to this was the travelling and lecturing in cities and in raw frontier towns, bringing him into touch with the people, and this he knew and valued.

In 1837 Emerson gave the Phi Beta Kappa oration in Cambridge, The American Scholar, which increased his growing reputation, but the following year his Address to the Senior Class at the Divinity School brought out, even from the friendly Unitarians, severe strictures and warnings against its dangerous doctrines. Of this heresy Emerson said: "I deny personality to God because it is too little, not too much." He really strove to elevate the idea of God. Yet those who were pained or shocked by his teachings respected Emerson. His lectures were still in demand; he was often asked to speak by literary societies at orthodox colleges. He preached regularly at East Lexington until 1838, but thereafter withdrew from the ministerial office. At this time the progressive and spiritually minded young people used to meet for discussion and help in Boston, among them George Ripley, Cyrus Bartol, James Freeman Clarke, Alcott, Dr. Hedge, Margaret Fuller, and Elizabeth Peabody. Perhaps from this gathering of friends, which Emerson attended, came what is called the Transcendental Movement, two results of

which were the Brook Farm Community and the Dial magazine, in which last Emerson took great interest, and was for the time an editor. Many of these friends were frequent visitors in Concord. Alcott moved thither after the breaking up of his school. Hawthorne also came to dwell there. Henry Thoreau, a Concord youth, greatly interested Emerson; indeed, became for a year or two a valued inmate of his home, and helped and instructed him in the labors of the garden and little farm, which gradually grew to ten acres, the chief interest of which for the owner was his trees, which he loved and tended. Emerson helped introduce his countrymen to the teachings of Carlyle, and edited his works here, where they found more readers than at home.

In 1847 Emerson was invited to read lectures in England, and remained abroad a year, visiting France also in her troublous times. English Traits was a result. Just before this journey he had collected and published his poems. A later volume, called May Day, followed in 1867. He had written verses from childhood, and to the purified expression of poetry he, through life, eagerly aspired. He said, "I like my poems best because it is not I who write them." In 1866 the degree of Doctor of Laws was conferred on him by Harvard University, and he was chosen an Overseer. In 1867 he again gave the Phi Beta Kappa oration, and in 1870 and 1871 gave courses in Philosophy in the University Lectures at Cambridge.

Emerson was not merely a man of letters. He recognized and did the private and public duties of the hour. He exercised a wide hospitality to souls as well as bodies. Eager youths came to him for rules, and went away with light. Reformers, wise and unwise, came to him, and were kindly received. They were often disappointed that they could not harness him to their partial and transient

scheme. He said, My reforms include theirs: I must go my way; help people by my strength, not by my weakness. But if a storm threatened, he felt bound to appear and show his colors. Against the crying evils of his time he worked bravely in his own way. He wrote to President Van Buren against the wrong done to the Cherokees, dared speak against the idolized Webster, when he deserted the cause of Freedom, constantly spoke of the iniquity of slavery, aided with speech and money the Free State cause in Kansas, was at Phillips's side at the antislavery meeting in 1861 broken up by the Boston mob, urged emancipation during the war.

He enjoyed his Concord home and neighbors, served on the school committee for years, did much for the Lyceum, and spoke on the town's great occasions. He went to all town-meetings, oftener to listen and admire than to speak, and always took pleasure and pride in the people. In return he was respected and loved by them.

Emerson's house was destroyed by fire in 1872, and the incident exposure and fatigue did him harm. His many friends insisted on rebuilding his house and sending him abroad to get well. He went up the Nile, and revisited England, finding old and new friends, and, on his return, was welcomed and escorted home by the people of Concord. After this time he was unable to write. His old age was quiet and happy among his family and friends. He died in April, 1882.

EDWARD W. EMERSON.

January, 1899.

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I - POEMS

* * * * *

GOOD-BYE

Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home:
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine.
Long through thy weary crowds I roam;
A river-ark on the ocean brine,
Long I've been tossed like the driven foam:
But now, proud world! I'm going home.

Good-bye to Flattery's fawning face;
To Grandeur with his wise grimace;
To upstart Wealth's averted eye;
To supple Office, low and high;
To crowded halls, to court and street;
To frozen hearts and hasting feet;
To those who go, and those who come;
Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home.

I am going to my own hearth-stone,
Bosomed in yon green hills alone,—
secret nook in a pleasant land,
Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
Where arches green, the livelong day,
Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
And vulgar feet have never trod
A spot that is sacred to thought and God.

O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,

I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
For what are they all, in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?

EACH AND ALL

Little thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown
Of thee from the hill-top looking down;
The heifer that lows in the upland farm,
Far-heard, lows not thine ear to charm;
The sexton, tolling his bell at noon,
Deems not that great Napoleon
Stops his horse, and lists with delight,
Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine height;
Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent.
All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.
I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it cheers not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky;—
He sang to my ear,—they sang to my eye.
The delicate shells lay on the shore;
The bubbles of the latest wave
Fresh pearls to their enamel gave,
And the bellowing of the savage sea
Greeted their safe escape to me.
I wiped away the weeds and foam,
I fetched my sea-born treasures home;
But the poor, unsightly, noisome things
Had left their beauty on the shore
With the sun and the sand and the wild uproar.

The lover watched his graceful maid,
As 'mid the virgin train she strayed,
Nor knew her beauty's best attire
Was woven still by the snow-white choir.
At last she came to his hermitage,
Like the bird from the woodlands to the cage;—
The gay enchantment was undone,
A gentle wife, but fairy none.
Then I said, 'I covet truth;
Beauty is unripe childhood's cheat;
I leave it behind with the games of youth:'—
As I spoke, beneath my feet
The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,
Running over the club-moss burrs;
I inhaled the violet's breath;
Around me stood the oaks and firs;
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;
Over me soared the eternal sky.
Full of light and of deity;
Again I saw, again I heard,
The rolling river, the morning bird;—
Beauty through my senses stole;
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

THE PROBLEM

I like a church; I like a cowl;
I love a prophet of the soul;
And on my heart monastic aisles
Fall like sweet strains, or pensive smiles
Yet not for all his faith can see
Would I that cowlèd churchman be.

Why should the vest on him allure,
Which I could not on me endure?

Not from a vain or shallow thought
His awful Jove young Phidias brought;
Never from lips of cunning fell
The thrilling Delphic oracle;
Out from the heart of nature rolled
The burdens of the Bible old;
The litanies of nations came,
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,
Up from the burning core below,—
The canticles of love and woe:
The hand that rounded Peter's dome
And groined the aisles of Christian Rome
Wrought in a sad sincerity;
Himself from God he could not free;
He builded better than he knew;—
The conscious stone to beauty grew.

Know'st thou what wove yon woodbird's nest
Of leaves, and feathers from her breast?
Or how the fish outbuilt her shell,
Painting with morn each annual cell?
Or how the sacred pine-tree adds
To her old leaves new myriads?
Such and so grew these holy piles,
Whilst love and terror laid the tiles.
Earth proudly wears the Parthenon,
As the best gem upon her zone,
And Morning opes with haste her lids
To gaze upon the Pyramids;
O'er England's abbeys bends the sky,
As on its friends, with kindred eye;
For out of Thought's interior sphere
These wonders rose to upper air;
And Nature gladly gave them place,
Adopted them into her race,

And granted them an equal date
With Andes and with Ararat.

These temples grew as grows the grass;
Art might obey, but not surpass.
The passive Master lent his hand
To the vast soul that o'er him planned;
And the same power that reared the shrine
Bestrode the tribes that knelt within.
Ever the fiery Pentecost
Girds with one flame the countless host,
Trances the heart through chanting choirs,
And through the priest the mind inspires.
The word unto the prophet spoken
Was writ on tables yet unbroken;
The word by seers or sibyls told,
In groves of oak, or fanes of gold,
Still floats upon the morning wind,
Still whispers to the willing mind.
One accent of the Holy Ghost
The heedless world hath never lost.
I know what say the fathers wise,—
The Book itself before me lies,
Old *Chrysostom*, best Augustine,
And he who blent both in his line,
The younger *Golden Lips* or mines,
Taylor, the Shakspeare of divines.
His words are music in my ear,
I see his cowlèd portrait dear;
And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be.

TO RHEA

Thee, dear friend, a brother soothes,
Not with flatteries, but truths,
Which tarnish not, but purify
To light which dims the morning's eye.
I have come from the spring-woods,
From the fragrant solitudes;—
Listen what the poplar-tree
And murmuring waters counselled me.

If with love thy heart has burned;
If thy love is unreturned;
Hide thy grief within thy breast,
Though it tear thee unexpressed;
For when love has once departed
From the eyes of the false-hearted,
And one by one has torn off quite
The bandages of purple light;
Though thou wert the loveliest
Form the soul had ever dressed,
Thou shalt seem, in each reply,
A vixen to his altered eye;
Thy softest pleadings seem too bold,
Thy praying lute will seem to scold;
Though thou kept the straightest road,
Yet thou errest far and broad.

But thou shalt do as do the gods
In their cloudless periods;
For of this lore be thou sure,—
Though thou forget, the gods, secure,
Forget never their command,
But make the statute of this land.
As they lead, so follow all,
Ever have done, ever shall.
Warning to the blind and deaf,
'T is written on the iron leaf,